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A Jewel Commentary to the Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara



Homage to the Three Jewels

With body, speech and mind I bow to Tara,
The active energy of Buddhas past, present and future,
The *Bhagavati* embodying the source of all Buddhas.

Herein I shall explain as best as I am able
The twenty-one verses of prostration and praise to Tara
That were spoken by the perfect Buddha Vairochana.

Most sages of old agree that, from amongst the four divisions of the tantras, the *Tara Tantra* belongs to the Action (*Skt. Kriya*) Tantra classification. To be specific, the "Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara" is found in the third of the thirty-five chapters of the tantra entitled, *In Praise of Tara, Mother of all Tathagatas*. Although this work is said to belong to Kriya Tantra, it is also said that the "Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara" can be explained in terms of Highest Yoga (*Skt. Anuttarayoga*) Tantra.

THE SOURCE OF THE TWENTY-ONE VERSES

"Then the Bhagwan Buddha, a victorious, perfected and transcended lord, spoke to Manjugosha, the immortal Bodhisattva of Wisdom: "O Manjushri, this female form symbolises the source of the Buddhas of the three times. Therefore, O Manjushri, as all Buddhas of the past, present and future sing this praise of her, you also should do so in your mind." Then the Bhagawan went on to speak the *dharani* in praise of Arya Tara."

THE ACTUAL BODY OF THE TWENTY-ONE VERSES

The actual *dharani* called "The Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara" has two themes: the root mantra itself and the twenty-one verses of prostration and praise.

PRAISING BY MEANS OF THE ROOT MANTRA

Some traditions hold the following mantra to be the root mantra: nama sarva tathagata nam tadya tha om namo suhasa nama tare paramita.

However, the translator Pong-lo Chen-po rendered the following verse from the Indian scriptures:

Om! Homage to *Tare*, the Ture heroine,
Whose mantra *Tuttare* dispels all chaos,
And *Ture*, which fulfils all needs.
Svaha! To Tara I bow down.

This then, Om tare tuttare ture svaha, is the mantra that, according to most teachers, is worked into twenty of the twenty-one verses of prostration and praise (the first verse being in reference to legend and not containing a reference to the mantra).

THE DHARANI

The *dharani* itself has three parts: the first line of the liturgy, which provides a brief introduction to the nature of the subject; the twenty-one verses of prostration and praise; and the concluding lines that describe the benefits of the practice.

THE FIRST LINE, A PREAMBLE TO THE DHARANI

Om, to the venerable Arya Tara I bow down.

Om, the first word of this sentence, indicates turning for refuge, performing worship or even purifying the mind of stains and impurities.

The word *venerable*, or *Je-tsun* has two meanings: *Je* indicates that Tara is supreme amongst all sources of the Buddhas past, present, and future; and *tsun* means that externally she embodies Hinayana practice for individual liberation; internally she represents the Mahayana practice of the bodhimind, the altruistic mind of enlightenment; and secretly she symbolises the holding of Vajrayana *samaya*.

Arya, or transcended, indicates the state far above ordinary faults, the state wherein obscurations to meditative perception of deeper truths have been abandoned.

Tara means *free*, or liberated. It indicates the state beyond the ocean of suffering. Being a female word, it also refers to the state wherein all sentient beings are held with an equal love, where attachment and aversion have been overcome. *Tara* symbolises the love for all sentient beings that resembles the love that a mother holds for all her children, being without discrimination and being equally strong for all.

I bow down has two meanings. The first is to sweep away the negativity and obscuration caused by karma and delusion, together with subtle psychic defilements. The second is to make

a gesture of respect and concentrated awareness with our body, speech and mind.

THE TWENTY-ONE VERSES OF PROSTRATION AND PRAISE

These fall into three main sections: praising by means of the legends associated with Tara; praising the symbolic aspects of her manifestations and praising her enlightened activity.

PRAISES IN REFERENCE TO LEGEND

- (1) *I prostrate to Tara, she swift and fearless,
Whose eyes flash like lightning;
Born from a lotus in an ocean of tears
Of Avalokiteshvara, Lord of the Three Worlds.*

The homage is made to Tara, who was born from the tears of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, embodiment of the mercy of all Buddhas, a protector of all beings in the realms of desire, form and formlessness who arise as an "I" based upon samsaric aggregates.

It is said that once the Bodhisattva of Compassion became dismayed on seeing that, even though he had striven with all his might to free the sentient beings from samsara, the number of the beings suffering in samsara was not significantly decreasing. He burst into tears and from the pool that formed from the water issuing from the lotus eyes of the Compassionate Bodhisattva there sprung forth a lotus. From the lotus appeared Arya Tara, whose exquisite face embodies the delicacy of a million lotus blossoms.

Thus the compassion of all Buddhas emanated as a fountain of enlightened energy, Arya Tara, divinity of mystical activity, who turned to the Bodhisattva of Compassion and said, "O noble one, I offer myself in the service of freeing the countless sentient beings from cyclic existence as quickly as possible. Shed

no more tears. We shall work together to turn the battle against samsara." Then a net of lights shone forth from her two eyes and scanned the three realms of the world.

According to Pan-chen Nyi-ma Be-pa, this refers to the form of Tara known as "Tara the Heroine."

VERSES IN PRAISE OF TARA'S SYMBOLIC ATTRIBUTES

The verses in praise of the symbolic attributes of Tara's being has two parts: praising the aspects of her Beatific Form (*Skt. Samboghakaya*); and, secondly, praising her Wisdom, or Truth Body (*Skt. Dharmakaya*) aspect.

Tara has two main types of Beatific Form: peaceful and wrathful. There are six verses in praise of her peaceful forms.

- (2) *I prostrate to she whose face is made
Of one hundred full autumn moons
And blazes with the dazzling light
Of a thousand constellations.*

This verse describes the brilliance of the Beatific Form of enlightenment: a hundred autumn moons shining in a brilliantly clear cloudless sky, a thousand stellar constellations reflected in a face.

Some translations of this verse read 'twice eight' (Tib. brgyad-gnyis) instead of 'a hundred' (Tib. rbgya-ni), and give the commentary that this refers to the teeth of a Beatific Form, which is one of the thirty-two major marks of perfection; the imagery being that her sixteen teeth, each of which is a symbol of perfect knowledge, shine forth as brilliantly white autumn moons.

This verse is said to be in reference to the form of Tara known as "Tara of White Lustre."

HER HAND POSTURES

- (3) *I prostrate to she with hands adorned by lotus flowers,
Golden blue Tara, embodiment of the perfections:*

*Generosity, joyous effort, pacifying discipline,
Patience, meditation and wisdom of the ultimate.*

This is "Tara of Golden Hue," whose colour is blue tinged with a golden radiance. The fingers of her left hand, which is poised at her heart, hold the stem of a water-born lotus the flower of which has opened into bloom beside her ear. This symbolises how the enlightened state of Tara embodies the ten perfections. The most important six of these are listed in the third and fourth lines of the verse.

The discipline of the Tara tantric system is said to be *pacifying* because it eliminates disharmonious conditions, material grasping, laziness, attachment, aversion, mental wandering, distorted views and so forth.

HOW TARA IS REVERED BY THE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS

- (4) *I prostrate to she who crowns the heads of all Buddhas,
Whose action is victorious without limit.
O source of every perfection,
The Bodhisattvas themselves rely upon you.*

Because Tara is the mother of all the Buddhas, they carry her upon the crowns of their heads as an *ushnisha*. She symbolises the very forces that have the power to gain total victory over negative events of this life as well as over the obscurations of delusion and the obscurations to omniscience, such as projecting labels upon the three circles (e.g., oneself, the external world and the activities that connect the two).

The Bodhisattvas of the ten stages, who are completing the ten perfections, must also fully rely upon Tara; for she embodies the utter fulfillment of the ten.

This verse refers to the form of Tara known as "Victorious Ushnisha Tara."

HOW SHE OVERCOMES DISHARMONIOUS CONDITIONS

- (5) *I prostrate to she who, uttering 'Tuttare' and 'Hum',
Tramples to dust under her feet
The seven worlds of desire, form and space
And has power to invoke all forces.*

The syllables *Tuttare* and *Hum* that she utters, together with the syllable *Hum* at her heart, symbolise the wisdom of emptiness combined with great compassion. With her two feet, which also have the nature of wisdom (of emptiness) and compassion, she presses down upon the seven realms of the world, thus invoking all forces and placing them in joy.

The seven worlds refer to the three lower realms (of hell creatures, ghosts and animals), the realms of man and the desire gods, and the realms of the gods of form and formlessness.

This verse is to the form of Tara called "Tara who Resounds the Sound of *Hum*."

HOW WORLDLY GODS WORSHIP HER

- (6) *I prostrate to she who receives the offerings
Of Indra, Agni, Brahma, Vayu and all the great gods.
The spirits, zombies, scent-eaters and yakshas
Before her sing praises.*

All the great gods of the earth—the great Indra, Agni the God of Fire, Brahma the Creator, Vayu the God of Wind, etc.—pay homage to Arya Tara. Moreover, even the spirits led by Ganesh, the zombies who regard Ishwara as their lord, and the yakshas whose leader is the mighty Vaishravana, together with all their entourages, sing praises at her lotus feet. This is the "Totally Victorious Tara."

The meaning of the verse is simply that Tara represents the beyond-samsara state to which even the great gods of the universe still aspire. By completing the yogas of the Tara system one quickly surpasses even the gods.

HOW TARA CRUSHES EXTERNAL THREATS

- (7) *I prostrate to she who, uttering 'Hrad' and 'Phat',
Thoroughly shatters external threats.
Her right leg drawn in and left extended,
She blazes amidst darting flames.*

The wrathful Tara mantra has the power to destroy external threats such as the influence of ghosts, etc., as well as interferences to the attainment of enlightenment's ultimate bliss.

This verse is to "Tara who Destroys Negativity." Sitting in a peaceful posture, her right leg symbolises the wisdom of emptiness and left great compassion. Thus she presses upon the three realms of the world with the feet of wisdom and great compassion, her body blazing amidst darting flames.

Although this is essentially a peaceful emanation of Tara, externally she is slightly wrathful. To symbolise this she sits in the centre of a raging fire.

PRAISING TARA'S WRATHFUL FORMS

There are seven verses in praise of Tara's wrathful *Sambhogakaya* forms.

TARA'S EXCELLENCE IN REMOVING MARAS AND THE TWO OBSCURATIONS

- (8) *I prostrate to Ture, who vanquishes
The great fears, the mightiest devils.
With a wrathful twist of her lotus face,
She slays all foes without exception.*

Ture refers to Tara. *The great fears* are the ferocious army of maras, which embody the host of delusions, *Ture* crushes all four types of maras. Her lotus face is marked with lines of wrath and her manner is that of a wrathful Bodhisattva destroy-

ing the enemies within: the obscurations of delusion, which obstruct the attainment of liberation from samsara; and the obscurations to knowledge, which obstruct the attainment of omniscience. Tara practice destroys both of these obscurations, together with their seeds.

This is "Tara who Heralds Supreme Power."

THE SYMBOLS IN TARA'S TWO HANDS

- (9) *I prostrate to she exquisitely adorned
By the hand mudra "Three Jewels" at her heart.
Her glorious wheel fills all directions
With an overwhelming burst of light.*

Holding the stem of a lotus at her heart between the thumb and middle finger of the left hand, her remaining three left fingers are stretched upward into the mudra of the Three Jewels. Her right hand, held in the mudra Supreme Generosity, is adorned by a wheel of truth that radiates forth waves of light to outshine the lights of samsara.

This is "Tara of the Rosewood Forest."

PRAISING TARA'S CROWN AND HER LAUGH

- (10) *I prostrate to she brilliant with joy,
Her radiant crown source of a garland of light.
Smiling and laughing she utters 'Tuttare'
And overpowers devils and gods of the world.*

Understanding the aspirations of the various disciples having faith and appreciation, her head crown emanates a garland of lights to outshine all others. Laughing with mantric laughter she utters *Ture*, bringing all maras and the eight great gods of the world under her control.

This is "Tara who Dispels Sorrow."

HOW TARA PRACTICE ACTIVATES THE TEN DIRECTION PROTECTORS

- (11) *I prostrate to she with power to invoke
All the armies of local protectors.
With face fiercely wrinkled and a vibrant Hum
She brings freedom from every poverty.*

Practice of the *Tara Tantra* has the power to invoke the protectors of the universe, such as the ten direction protectors, together with their entourages, and to direct them to accomplish their magical activities. These natural forces of goodness spontaneously respond to the goodness generated by meditation upon Tara.

The wrathful lines on her face flicker and lights shine forth from the syllable *Hum* at her heart, bestowing total liberation from all forms of sorrow, such as poverty and pain.

This is "Tara who Invokes."

PRAISING HER HEAD ORNAMENTS

- (12) *I prostrate to she crowned by a crescent moon,
Her head ornament dazzlingly bright.
From her hair-knot Buddha Amitabha
Constantly beams forth streams of light.*

Tara's visible head ornament is a crescent moon, like that on the first day of the month, radiant with the light that eliminates sorrow. On her hair-knot sits Buddha Amitabha, who emanates a constant stream of light to fulfil the needs of living beings.

This verse is to "Tara of Auspicious Brilliance."

TARA'S WRATHFUL POSTURE

- (13) *I prostrate to she who dwells within a garland
Of flames like the aeon ending in fire.
Her right leg stretched and left withdrawn,
Joy of her followers and scourge of their foes.*

Just as the fire at the end of time blazes with the heat of seven suns and easily consumes the earth and stones of the world, the wisdom fires in which Tara sits consume easily the myriads of delusions, the foes of the trainees joyously following a spiritual path.

This is "Tara who Bestows Maturity."

THE SYLLABLE *Hum* WHICH EMANATES LIGHTS

- (14) *I prostrate to she whose feet pound
And palms of hands press upon the earth.
With a wrathful glance and the sound 'Hum',
She subdues all in the seven dimensions.*

Twitching the lines of wrath on her face and stamping upon the earth in a ferocious manner with her right foot, she holds her right hand in the threatening mudra and emanates lights from the syllable *Hum* at her heart, filling the seven dimensions of the world with light and bringing them under her power.

This is "Tara with Vibrant Lines of Wrath."

PRAISING TARA'S DHARMAKAYA ASPECT

- (15) *I prostrate to the blissful, virtuous, peaceful one,
She who acts from within nirvana's serenity.
With the pure sounds 'Svaha' and also 'Om'
She annihilates even the greatest evils.*

According to Je-tsun Drak-pa, Tara's lotus has the symbolic value of possessing the blissful, beyond-samsara wisdom, possessing all virtuous qualities free from faults such as delusion, and abiding in the resultant *peace* beyond suffering. Thus her *actions* are done within the framework of *nirvana's serenity*.

Some teachers also explain these two lines as referring to the paths and stages leading to enlightenment.

On the path of collection, first of the five paths, one gains

a taste of the naturally unborn; and as non-bliss has no inherent existence, one experiences *bliss*. On the path of application, second of the five paths, one gains profound meditative experience and no longer has signs of coarse mental distortion, thus becoming supremely *virtuous*. Then one becomes free from the seeds of negativity by the meditative experience of the path of direct vision into the deeper significance of Being, and all sufferings such as those of birth, sickness and old age become *pacified*. Finally, on the path beyond training, wherein even subtle negative propensities have become pacified, one acts within nirvana and the Dharmakaya wisdom. Thus by reciting *svaha*, the last two syllables of the root mantra ; *om*, which is the first syllable; and the seven syllables (*tare tuttare ture*) which are between these two mantric words, even the greatest evil—the ignorance of grasping at substantiality—is destroyed.

This verse is in praise of the mind and speech factors of Tara's *Dharmakaya* aspect. It is in reference to "Tara of Virtuous and Creative Serenity."

PRAISING TARA'S ENLIGHTENED ACTIVITY

This section has six verses. The first of these is in reference to Tara's peaceful and wrathful mantras.

THE PEACEFUL AND WRATHFUL MANTRAS

- (16) *I prostrate to she whose followers are joyous,
Who utterly destroys the forms of enemies.
The knowledge letter 'Hum' and the ten-syllable
mantra
Arranged on her heart's wheel bestow liberation.*

The *ten-syllable mantra* refers to the root mantra—Om tare tuttare ture svaha. The *knowledge letter Hum* indicates the wrathful mantra—Om nama tare namo hare hum hara svaha. By the power of these two mantras one destroys the enemies

of liberation—grasping at a self within and clinging to substantial existence in the external world. The fortunate disciple for whom this Dharma Wheel is turned quickly eliminates these inner negativities.

This is “Tara, Destroyer of Grasping.”

HOW TARA SHAKES THE THREE WORLDS

- (17) *I prostrate to Ture, she with pounding feet
Whose essence is the seed letter Hum;
Who causes Meru, Mandhara and Vindhya mountains
And all the three worlds to tremble and quake.*

From the transformation of the primordial sound *Hum* appears Ture, whose pounding feet cause everything in the external world to tremble and shake.

This is “Tara who Produces Bliss.”

HOW TARA ELIMINATES THE EFFECTS OF POISON

- (18) *I prostrate to she who holds in her hand
A moon resembling a celestial lake.
Saying ‘Ture’ twice and also the sound ‘phat’,
She dispels poisons entirely and forever.*

The *moon resembling a celestial lake* symbolises the power to eliminate the poisonous effects of delusions and mental distortions from within the mind. This is the strong poison to be eliminated. Through the power of reciting *Tuttare* twice and also the mantric syllable *Phat*, even external poisons are overcome.

This is “Totally Victorious Tara.”

HOW TARA ELIMINATES DISPUTES AND NIGHTMARES

- (19) *I prostrate to she upon whom
The kings of gods and spirits rely.
Her armour radiating joy to all,
She soothes conflicts and nightmares as well.*

Indra of the desire gods, Brahma of the realm of form, the leaders of the spirit worlds, and all kings of the gods and celestial beings bow their heads to Tara in obeisance. They who thus honour her and with single-pointed concentration joyously meditate on her peaceful and wrathful forms and recite her peaceful and wrathful armour mantras will experience the brilliance of the transforming energies that outshine and eliminate all external conflicts and nightmares.

This is "Tara Who Consumes Sorrow."

HOW TARA CURES DISEASE

- (20) *I prostrate to she whose two eyes
Like the sun and moon are brilliant.
Saying 'Hara' twice and also 'Tuttare'
She calms and quells the most fearful disease.*

Her right eye fierce like the sun, her left gentle like the moon, she radiates forth dazzlingly bright beams of light. By reciting the wrathful mantra *Hara* twice and also the Peaceful Mantra, *Tuttare*, the most powerful illness is overcome.

This is "Tara, Source of *Siddhi*."

HOW TARA OVERCOMES GHOSTS AND ZOMBIES

- (21) *I prostrate to she whose three natures
Are made perfect with serene strength
Able to eliminate demons, zombies and yakshas.
O Ture, most exalted of the supreme.*

Tara's *three natures*, or her body, speech and mind, appear respectively as the letters *Om* at her crown, *Ah* at her throat and *Hum* at her heart. These possess the strength to pacify the strong poisons, the delusions within, as well as external poisons such as demons, zombies and yakshas. The *most exalted Ture* refers to Tara herself.

This is "Tara Who Brings Complete Perfection."

THE CONCLUSION

The text concludes with four themes: defining the attitude of the practitioner; the time for practice; the beneficial effects of the practice; and the number of recitations to be performed together with a summary of the beneficial effects that are produced.

THE PRACTITIONER'S ATTITUDE

*One should faithfully recite this prayer
With a clear and appreciative mind.*

Recitation of these twenty-one verses in praise of the peaceful and wrathful mantras of Tara together with prostrations of body, speech and mind, are to be performed on the basis of single-pointed concentration conjoined with wisdom. One's meditation should have the warmth of heartfelt appreciation of the *Tara Tantra* and should not merely be a flow of empty words from the mouth.

THE TIME FOR PRACTICE

*Being mindful of the practice at dusk and dawn
One discovers every level of fearlessness,
All evil karma is pacified
And the lower realms are destroyed.*

One should perform this practice at both dusk and dawn, maintaining awareness of the symbolic forms of Tara, reciting her mantra and reading this praise. Specifically, by recollecting the wrathful forms of Tara at dusk and her peaceful forms at dawn, one discovers every level of fearlessness from interferences, such as untimely death, and the sicknesses and harmful forces which afflict us in this life. Moreover, our mindstream becomes

free from evil karma, the cause of future rebirths in the lower realms, and as a result the lower realms are destroyed.

THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE

*Seven million Buddhas will manifest
And bestow empowering initiations;
Yet one shall gain even further greatness,
For one shall attain final Buddhahood itself.*

Seven million Buddhas will gradually bestow the stages of empowerment upon one in this life and one will gain the general siddhi of life, which gives power over the harms of humans and non-humans. Moreover, one will gain the supreme siddhi, the ultimate attainment of final Buddhahood.

*The strong poisons opposing that attainment,
Together with the stable and moving poisons,
And anything eaten or drunk
Are eliminated by recollecting Arya Tara.*

The strong poison opposing the attainment of Buddhahood is to hold wrong views concerning truth. This is the final, ultimate and most stable poison, causing one to speak against the Dharma out of ignorance or to speak against Dharma teachers out of aversion. Mindfulness of the Tara method eliminates this stable poison. Moreover, the effects of moving poisons such as of rabid dogs and poisonous snakes, as well as contaminated foods and drinks, etc., are all dispelled by recollecting the forms, mantras and so forth of Tara. Thus does Tara eliminate the causes of suffering.

As for how she affects resultant suffering itself, the prayer reads:—

*The host of painful sufferings
Caused by ghosts, diseases or poisons*

*Are totally abandoned,
Even for other sentient beings.*

The first three lines of this passage refer to fulfilling one's own spiritual needs. The last line refers to fulfilling the needs of others. That is to say, if one meditates upon and respectfully recites the prayer of the "Twenty-One Verses" for the benefit of someone else, the above-mentioned beneficial effects shall ripen upon the recipient of the ritual.

THE NUMBER OF RECITATIONS AND A SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

*If one recites this prayer to Tara
Two, three, (and/or) seven times,
Those wanting a son will obtain one,
Those wanting wealth will gain it,
All prayers will be fulfilled
And all hindrances destroyed.*

The basis for recitation of the "Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara" is the renowned "Four Mandala Rite."

(Note: A rite in four cycles. In the first of the four one invokes the Gurus, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, etc., makes a mandala offering to them and then requests their blessings. One then invokes Tara and makes three mandala offerings to her, reciting the "Twenty-one Verses" respectively two, three and seven times after each. In some traditions one follows those respectively by 300, 300 and 400 recitations of the root mantra and by requests for blessings and realizations.)

As for the second line in the verse, there are a number of ways to read it according to the method and lineage of practice. In one tradition *two* means that those wishing a son should perform the "four mandala rite" twice; *three* means that those

wanting wealth should perform the rite three times; and *seven* means that if one performs it seven times, all one's prayers shall be answered.

The translator Pang-lo Chen-po mentions an interesting interpretation wherein *two* refers to two prerequisite qualifications of the practitioner: he or she should be of sharp intellect and should possess the stability provided by appreciative faith. *Three* refers to the number of recitations to be done during both the dawn and the dusk sittings; which, together with one recitation during the day, means *seven* daily recitations of the prayer.

Two, *three* and *seven* also mean that if someone possessing the *two* qualities recites the "Twenty-One Verses" *seven* times each day as described above in *three* sessions for *three* times *seven* days, i.e., for three weeks, all wishes will be fulfilled and one will become a mine of fearlessness. Interferences to attainment will become impotent and all hindrances will be abandoned by means of their direct opponents.

In the tradition of Bu-ton Rinpoche, *two* refers to day and night, and *three* means that three sessions are to be performed during each of these two periods. The three daily sessions are to be performed just after sunrise, at noon and just before sunset; the three nightly sessions at dusk, midnight and early dawn. Thus practising six recitations a day for *seven* days, the prayer is read forty-two times. Were one to pursue the practice of the "Twenty One Verses in Praise of Tara" in a continuous stream in this way for a week, all of the beneficial effects described above will be produced.

Thus is concluded the hymn to Arya Tara spoken by the perfect Buddha Vairochana.

A Concise Meditational Practice



(Arrange a comfortable meditation seat before an altar having an image of Tara, an arrangement of offerings, etc. Sit in the full or half lotus posture, or however is most comfortable. Begin the session by taking refuge, generating the bodhimind and meditating on the four immeasurable thoughts:—)

To the Enlightened Ones, the Dharma and the Spiritual Community

Until enlightenment I turn for refuge.

By the spiritual energy of this practice,

May enlightenment be attained for the benefit of all.

(3x)

May all beings have happiness and its causes,

May they never have suffering or its causes.

May they constantly dwell in joy transcending sorrow;

May they dwell in equal love for both near and far. (3x)

(Having thus taken refuge and given birth to the Mahayana attitude, commence the actual meditation session by reciting

the Svabhava mantra and purifying the sphere of contemplation through meditation upon emptiness.)

Om svabhava shuddhoh sarvadharmā svabhava shuddhoh
ham.

From within the sphere of emptiness there appears the syllable *Pam*. This transforms into a lotus bearing the syllable *Ah*. *Ah* transforms into a radiantly white moon-like cushion that covers the stamen of the lotus. Above this is the syllable *Tam*, the sound of which is the resonance of the ultimate nature of my own mind. *Tam* transforms into a blue utpala flower marked by the syllable *Tam*.

Lights radiate forth from the utpala and *Tam*, delighting all enlightened beings and fulfilling the needs of living beings. The lights then withdraw into their sources and the utpala, together with the syllable *Tam*, transforms into light. Suddenly I appear (from within the light transformations) as the holy Arya Tara, whose mind is beyond samsara. My body is green in colour and my face reflects a warmly serene smile. My right hand is in the mudra Supreme Generosity and my left in the mudra Bestowing Refuge, the thumb and ring finger of which hold the stem of an utpala that opens into blossom over my left shoulder. I am clothed in silken garments, am adorned by the precious ornaments and I sit in the heroine posture. Attained to immortality, my appearance is that of a sixteen year old. My face is serene yet vivacious, and the syllable *Om* marks the crown of my head, *Ah* my throat, and *Hum* my heart.

Lights shine forth from the *Hum* at my heart, inviting Tara of the Rosewood Forest, who, surrounded by a host of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, comes into the space before me.

Jah hum bam hoh: the summoned Wisdom Being merges with the Symbolic Being.

Once again lights radiate from the *Tam* at my heart. They invoke the Deities of Empowerment. I request them “Bestow initiation upon me”; whereupon they come toward me and, holding up vases filled with waters of empowerment, sprinkle initiating nectars upon me. The waters of empowerment enter via the crown of my head, completely filling my body and purifying me of stains. They then overflow from my crown; and Amitabha, the Buddha of Boundless Light, appears as an ornament above my head.

(Thus visualising yourself as a fully empowered Tara, generate and make the offering of the two purifying waters and the objects of the senses:—)

Before me appears a set of huge, vast offering vessels made from jewels. Inside of these are the celestially produced substances that in nature are the wisdom of bliss and emptiness, in form are offerings and in function act as objects of the six senses that instill nonsamsaric, transcendental joy.

Om ah hum. (3x)

Om Arya Tara sapariwara argham praticcha hum svaha (*and so forth for all eight offerings, successively replacing the word argham in the above mantra with padyam, pushpe, dhupe, aloke, gandhe, naivindya and finally shabde. Then:—*)

Homage to Arya Tara, at whose lotus feet
The gods and non-gods make worship.
Homage to Tara, mother of all Buddhas,
Who heralds freedom from limitation.

Homage to Arya Tara, a beyond-samsara goddess
Whose form is delightful to perceive
And whose precious ornaments shine with splendour
Like stars reflected from an emerald mountain.

At one's heart is a moon disc marked by the syllable Tam with the mantra Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha circling on the perimeter of the disc. As one recites the mantra, lights emanate from the syllable Tam and the mantra, and perform the various purifications and activities [as should be learned from the oral transmission]. At the conclusion of the recitation, once again make the offerings to oneself as the liberated Arya Tara, offer the verses of praise and recite any prayers, dedications and auspicious thoughts that you appreciate.)

By the meritorious energy of my pouring forth
The oral tradition on the practice
Of Arya Tara, the beyond-samsara goddess,
May all the limitless sentient beings
Be led by the energy of the Enlightened Ones
Until their Buddhahood is achieved.



A Crown Ornament for the Wise

To Arya Avalokiteshvara I bow down.



I bow to exalted Tara, at whose lotus feet
Vishnu, Brahma, Vrihapati, Ganesh, Ishvara, Surya
And the crown ornaments among the many gods
Most reverently offer obeisance.

Through the miraculous power of Avalokiteshvara's
compassion,
The insight, kindness and strength of all Buddhas
Manifest in the form of the beautiful Goddess of Action.
To she who protects from poverty I bow down.

Upon a pure lotus and moon symbolising knowledge and
voidness
Sits the emerald green goddess with one face and two arms.
I bow to you, vibrant with youth; your right leg outstretched
And left withdrawn, symbolise insight and method conjoined.

Her rounded breasts a treasure of transcendent bliss,
Her moon-like face smiling brightly,

Her wide compassionate eyes gazing serenely:
I bow to the beautiful one of the Rosewood Forest.

I bow to you whose lucent right hand,
Like a turquoise tree spreading its branches,
Rests poised in the mudra of Supreme Generosity,
Inviting sages to a festival of siddhi.

Your left hand in the mudra Giving Refuge,
Symbol of the Three Jewels, seems to breathe in the ear :
O you who see a hundred terrors, do not be afraid
For I will always instantly protect you.

I bow to you with blue lotuses adorning your hands
That open as an inspiring sign, as though whispering:
Be not attracted to samsaric pleasures
But enter into the city of great liberation.

I bow to you who can conquer the Lord of Death;
For Buddha Amitabha is your crown,
He radiant as a ruby; his hands in meditation posture
Holding a bowl of ambrosia bestowing the siddhi of
immortality.

The craftsmen merit and wisdom have made
Your ornaments from wish-granting gems,
Divine, suffused with each and every beauty.
Wearer of these, to you I bow down.

Like an emerald mountain clothed in rainbows,
Her shoulders are draped in celestial silks and
A *panchalika* skirt hugs her tiny waist.
To you so beautifully clad, I bow down.

I bow to Marici, the goddess at your right side,
Her peaceful face emanating lights the colour of the sun;
And I bow to the goddess at your left, Ekajati, who is
Wrathful, lustful, radiant and the colour of the sky.

I bow to you whose presence is filled
By goddesses skilled in dance and song
Holding countless offerings such as white umbrellas,
Peacock fans, stringed instruments and flutes.

The consorts of Vishnu, Indra and Ishvara
And thousands of enchanting, immortal goddesses
Compete in beauty merely with your servants.
To the form of the exquisite goddess I bow down.

From the vast billowing clouds of your compassion resounds
The thunder of teachings sweet to the ear,
Seizing disciples in a stream of eight branches.
To you wise in transmission I bow down.

Ocean-like treasury of qualities of insight,
Who can describe you as you really are?
Your unimpeded mind so rich in the ten powers;
To you gone to the end of wisdom I bow down.

Though dwelling in peace you are moved by compassion
And on arms of kindness carry to peace
The beings struggling in this ocean of misery.
To you gone to the end of compassion I bow down.

Your miraculous activities of peace, increase, power and wrath
Like tides of the ocean are never at rest,
But spontaneously flow in an unbroken stream.
To you gone to the end of action I bow down.

Merely by remembering your feet is one protected
From the eight terrifying agents, all forms of evil
And the fearful obstacles to liberation and omniscience.
To you gone to the end of power I bow down.

Therefore, O Worthy Refuge, I entreat you:
Protect living beings from demons, ghosts and diseases,
Untimely death, nightmares, inauspicious omens
And every cause of fear.

Protect us from the terrifying lion of pride
Which dwells on the mountain of wrongly held views,
An inflated mentality holding itself as superior
And wielding a claw to belittle the world.

Protect us from the terrifying elephant ignorance that,
Untamed by the sharp hooks of mindful alertness
And confused by the alcohol of sensual indulgence,
Leads us down wrong paths toward sharp fangs of pain.

Protect us from the terrifying fires of anger
That, roused by the winds of deluded thought,
Billow forth swirling smoke-clouds of wrong actions
Razing the slow-grown forests of worth.

Protect us from the fearsome snake jealousy.
Nesting in its bed of ignorance,
It is unable to bear the richness of others
And instantly injects everything with poison.

Protect us from the dreaded thief wrong view
That creates the wilderness of inferior codes,
The barren wastes of eternalism and nihilism,
Destroying towns and sanctuaries of virtue and joy.

Protect us from the terrifying shackles of miserliness
That lock us in attachment difficult to spring
And binds all living beings helplessly
To the unbearable prison of cyclic existence.

Protect us from the terrifying waters of desire
That relentlessly take us in the current of samsara,
Where conditioned by the propelling winds of our karma
We are tossed in the waves of birth, sickness, aging and death.

Protect us from the terrifying ghost doubt,
That malignant spirit which in ignorance roams,
Attacking those with interest in ultimate aims
And obstructing the path to freedom.

By the power of this praise and supplication to you,
May conditions opposing Dharma be quelled;
May long life, goodness, glory, well-being
And all circumstances conducive to practise arise.

May all beings be protected by Amitabha Buddha
And led to the pure land of Sukhavati Heaven.
Without having to experience the hundredfold difficulty,
May they quickly touch the ground of awakening.

May we always remember our previous lives
And never be separated from the thought of enlightenment.
May we persevere firmly as a river flows
In following the vast ways of all Bodhisattvas.

Never hoping to benefit myself alone,
I will engage in the Great Way solely for others
And pursue the attainments that actually benefit,
Such as mystic vision, clairvoyance, patience and skill.

May I never be feint in furthering through infinite fields
 The holy teachings of the Victorious Ones;
 And in order constantly to fulfil the needs of beings,
 May I quickly and easily gain the stage of Buddha.



The Colophon: "A Crown Ornament for the Wise," a praise of and supplication to Green Tara, She of the Rosewood Forest; written by the Buddhist monk Gyalwa Gendun Drub after he had long propitiated Tara while living in retreat at the Hermitage of Great Awakening in the Tegchen Potrang.

White Tara: A Meditational Practice to Prolong Life



(Sit upon a comfortable meditational seat and begin the session by taking refuge, generating the bodhimind and meditating on the four immeasurable thoughts (as on page 25). Then:—)

For the ultimate benefit of all beings I must myself accomplish the state of Buddhahood. For this reason I now enter into this meditation and mantra recitation upon the holy White Tara, the Wish-fulfilling Wheel by which immortality is attained.

(Meditating in this way, generate a firm confidence that the meditational practice and mantra recitation which is about to be performed has the ability to accomplish all temporary and ultimate purposes, even the state of perfect Buddhahood.)

Om svabhava shuddhoh sarvadharmasvabhava shuddhoham.

Everything dissolves into emptiness. Within the sphere of emptiness there appears a lotus bearing a moon cushion. The sound *Tara-ah-ham* resonates and instantly I appear (seated upon the lotus) as the venerable White Tara. My legs are folded into the full vajra posture and my right hand is in the mudra Supreme Generosity. My left hand, which is poised at my heart, holds the stem of a lotus that opens into blossom beside my left shoulder. To symbolise the Buddhas of the three times, the tip of the lotus breaks into three branches: the middle branch bears a flower in full bloom, representing the Buddhas of the present time; the right branch bears a flower that has gone to fruit, symbolising the Buddhas of the past; and the left holds an unopened bud, the Buddhas of ages to come. Sitting upright upon a moon disc, a moon is my back-rest, precious ornaments adorn my sixteen year old body and Amitabha Buddha sits upon my head as a crown. The white syllable *Om* marks my forehead, the red syllable *Ah* marks my throat and the blue syllable *Hum* my heart, transforming these sites into the three *kayas* of the Enlightened Ones.

Meditating like this, the syllable *Ah* appears at my heart and transforms into a round moon disc hearing the white syllable *Tam*. Lights emanate forth from the *Tam* at my heart, inviting the Wisdom Being from her natural abode.

(As in the *Arya Tara sadhana*, page 27, make offerings and praises. Then:—)

Jah-hum-bam-hoh: the Wisdom Being and Symbolic Being merge and become one.

The syllable *Tam* at my heart suddenly melts and reappears as a white, eight-spoked wheel that in nature is the wisdom symbolised by White Tara. The wheel has five rims of mantras: three on the actual outer rim of the wheel, one on the hub and the fifth on the spokes.

At the hub one's name is interspersed between the mantric syllables *Om* and *Ham*. The inner of the three outer rims bears the (sixteen) vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet, which circle to the left. Upon the eight spokes stand the middle eight syllables of Tara's ten-syllable mantra, beginning in front and circling to the right. The central of the three outer rims bears the (thirty-four) consonants, which circle to the left, and the outermost rim bears the mantra of interdependent origination. All these letters are radiantly bright and flicker forth waves of light as does a butterlamp.

From all the letters and from the wisdom-wheel shine forth white lights. My body is filled with the nectars of immortality, and white lights emanate from each pore of my body to form an aura a span in radius around me. Meditating thus, the white radiance accomplishes the activity of pacifying illness, evil spirits, negative karmic forces, mental obscurations and hindrances to the completion of my natural lifespan.

Yellow lights then shine forth. They form a shell of yellow light outside the white aura. Contemplate that longevity and spiritual energy is thus generated, and all activities of increase accomplished.

Red lights now emanate from the wheel and letters. They form a shell outside the yellow, thus accomplishing all activities of power.

Blue lights shine forth and form a shell of light outside the red. They accomplish all activities of wrath.

Green lights now radiate forth, forming a shell of light outside the blue and accomplishing all the various activities.

Finally brown lights emanate forth and form a shell of light

outside the green. Meditate that thus all the activities are made firm.

Between each of these shells of light are countless tiny fully blossomed utpala flowers, so that not a space remains. The lights themselves are so firm that even the fire at the end of time could not affect them.

Meditating that you and/or those who look to you for protection are thus placed inside the ring of six auras. Without falling into mental wandering, recite the increasing mantra while meditating on lights emanating from the syllables. This increasing mantra—Om tare tuttare ture mama ayuh punye jnana pushtrim kuru svaha—should be recited 108 or however many times possible. Then recite the other mantras at least one time each, beginning with those on the inside of the wheel.

At the conclusion, visualise that the layers of light dissolve into one another beginning from the brown on the outside. The entire visualization gradually dissolves into the wheel of wisdom. Request the Wisdom Being aspect of oneself as the deity to return to its natural abode, and dedicate the root of merit.

Then visualising yourself as the transcendental goddess with the syllables Om, Ah and Hum marking your forehead, throat and crown respectively, summon the mandala of the venerable White Tara into the space before you, make the visualised offerings (of the two waters and the objects of the senses); and with profound intensity make any prayers and auspicious wishes, or perform any related meditational practices. Conclude by reciting a hundred of the Increasing Mantra. Thus is untimely death avoided.

Should one be unable to perform this meditation and recitation oneself, it is also effective to have someone else do it for one.

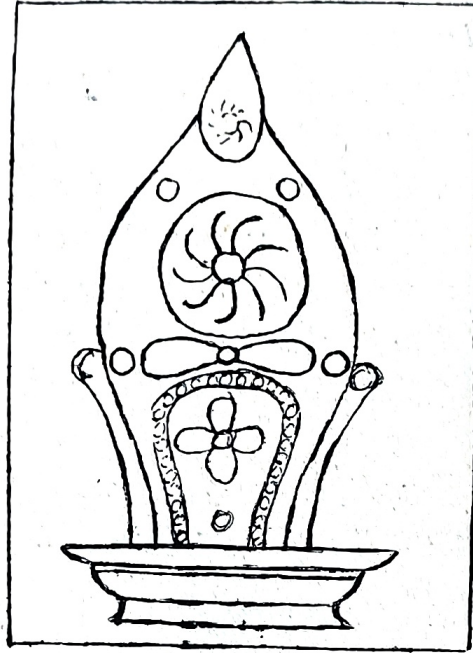
The sign of accomplishment of the practice is that one will dream of seeing a stupa (reliquary) or tsa-tsa (statuettes in honour of the dead).

My teacher Lama Chen-nga-pa himself has said, "Because Arya Tara is the collective manifestation of the enlightened activity of all the Buddhas, her yogic method is easily accomplished. The recitation of merely a hundred thousand of her mantra will cause hindrances to be averted. Should anyone having the initiation know how to practise the mantra correctly, then even though his/her head and limbs are severed he/she will be unable to be harmed; and even if the most definite signs of death have occurred, such as many fatal wounds, his/her life will easily be restored."

Such is the profound precept for extending one's lifespan through meditation upon the Wish-fulfilling Wheel.



White Tara : An Offering



Namo Taraya!!!

(If at the conclusion of the mantric recitation in the above sadhana one wishes to make the tor-ma offering, then upon the altar also arrange a vessel made of a precious substance. Inside the vessel place whatever offering is to be made (such as biscuits or a small bread or cake), mixing or anointing it with the three white and three sweet ingredients (milk, butter and curd; rock sugar, unrefined sugar and honey) in accordance with the Kriya Tantra tradition. Then, visualising yourself as Tara—)

For the benefit of all beings I must attain the state of perfect Buddhahood. To this end is the *tor-ma* offering now being made.

Above the *tor-ma* appears a white syllable *Tam*. Lights emanate forth from *Tam* and then return, upon which *Tam* melts and falls into the vessel. The vessel becomes vast and huge. The radiance from the syllable *Tam* then strikes against the

offering substances, transforming them into ambrosial nectar.

Om Ah Hum (3x)

(Invoking the guests of the offering:—)

Lights emanate forth from the *Tam* at my heart, purifying the negative karmic forces and spiritual obscurations afflicting all beings and transforming all that lives into emanations of liberated Tara. They come before me and send forth reed-like beams of light from their tongues, which absorb the essential energy of the offering.

Om tare tuttare ture svaha. Om akaro mu gam sarva dharma nam adyanutparn todta balimta kha kha kha hi kha hi.

(Then offer a hymn of praise and make any prayers you wish.

At the conclusion:—)

O venerable Tara, inspire the forces that enrich life and cause spiritual energy to increase. Inspire the forces that sustain life. Inspire the forces that pacify diseases and evil. Inspire the forces that can counteract negative instincts and spiritual obscurations within the mindstream. Inspire us quickly to attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis.

(The guests are then visualised as returning to their original places. One should then meditate upon emptiness for as long as possible.)

(To conclude the session, one recites the 100-syllable mantra and dedicates the energy of the practice to the attainment of full Buddhahood.)

Om padmasattva samaya manupalaya padma sattva tvenopa tshta dridho me bhava suposhyo me bhava sutoshyo me bhava anurakto me bhava sarva siddhi me prayacha sarva karma suchame chittam shri yam kuru hum ha ha ha ha hoh bhagawan sarva tathagata padma ma ma muncha padma bhava maha samaya sattva ah hum phat.

By the energy generated through this practice.

May I quickly gain Tara's liberated state;

And may all living beings also

Be placed on the ground of illumination.

A Gem to Increase Life and Wisdom

(IN PRAISE OF WHITE TARA)



Homage to the Female Buddha exquisite with youth.
Radiant as the eternal snows in all their glory,
She sits on a white lotus and a silvery moon
Indicating fully developed compassion and knowledge.

Homage to the Youthful One with full breasts,
One face and two arms. Sitting in vajra position,
She regally displays both grace and calm
And is filled with great bliss.

Homage to the Ultimately Generous One whose right hand,
In the mudra of Supreme Giving,
Easily releases boundless karmas of peace, increase,
power and wrath,
As well as the eight siddhis and even supreme Buddhahood.

Homage to the Spiritual Mother from whom
The Buddhas of all three times are born,

Whose power to protect us from wild animals, fires and the
eight terrors

Is depicted by her left hand holding a blue lotus.

Homage to the Refuge of the World whose eyes
In hands and feet gaze at the doors of freedom,
Who leads all manacled sentient creatures
Towards the isle of blissful liberation.

Homage to the one whose face unites
The beauty of a million autumn moons,
Whose wide eyes gaze with compassionate warmth
And whose joyous mouth smiles equally on all.

Homage to the one whose head
Is adorned with Amitayus, Boundless Life,
The mere thought of whom
Grants endless life and wisdom.
His hands, in contemplative mudra, hold
A vase filled with immortality's brew.

Homage to the All-Beautiful One whose crown
Steals from the sun and moon their light,
Whose sapphire tresses are half-knotted on top,
The rest falling freely over her shoulders.

Homage to the Majestic One whose sparkling ornaments
Of crown, earrings, necklaces, arm-bands, bracelets, anklets
and belt,
So elegantly arranged,
Surpass any worn by men and gods.

Homage to she whose celestial raiment
Of shoulder sash and skirt
Array her body in the way
Rainbows enhance the crystal mountains.

Homage to the goddess before whose lotus feet
Vishnu, Indra, Shiva, Brahma, anti-gods and spirits,
Men, apparitions and all the world
Submit themselves in complete devotion.

Glorious One, merely by reciting your mantra
And making offerings at your lotus feet,
One gains immortality, wisdom and merit
and all desired siddhis.
Therefore, before you I bow down.

The knowledge, compassion and power of all Buddhas
Appear in the form of you, Beautiful Goddess,
So I take refuge in you and make known my prayers.
Please eliminate the obstacles.
Which delay fulfilment of any aims.

Quickly release those peaceful actions of yours,
To calm the interferences to my quest for perfection.
Release me from the eight terrors, sickness and demons,
And other harmful agents, outer and inner.

Quickly send forth your perfect actions of increase,
Which multiply such qualities as life, merit, ungrasping
compassion.
The stainless wisdoms of learning, contemplation and
meditation,
And the three higher trainings.

Quickly release your perfect actions of power,
Which fulfil all wishes of the mind
And cause gods, men and spirits
To humbly bow before you.

Quickly direct your perfect actions of wrath,
To destroy the inner, outer and secret
Forces of evil that aim to confound
Truth and those who dwell within it.

Please grant me quick and easy attainments,
Such as the magic sword, mystic eye-medicine, fast walking,
The food pill and the precious vase,
And even *mahamudra*, the highest of siddhis.

In brief, from now until enlightenment is gained,
I respectfully make offerings at your lotus feet.
I need no other refuge than you.
Out of compassion gaze upon me and grant your protection.

By the meritorious energy of this practice,
May the transcended perfect Tara
Look upon me forever with pleasure,
And never leave me for even a moment.

May all sentient beings after death take rebirth
Before Amitayus in Sukavati, Land of Pure Joy.
May they live in the ways of the great Bodhisattvas,
And equal Avalokiteshvara, Lord of Compassion.

May I realise the oceans of sutras and tantras,
To be able to pass them on to others;
And may I strive until samsara is emptied
To uphold the victory banner of practising exactly as taught.

The colophon: This praise of exalted White Tara, supreme mother of all Buddhas, was written by the monk Gyalwa Gendun Drub while living in retreat at the Hermitage of Great Awakening in the Tegchen Potrang.